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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the historical development of applied linguistics in foreign language instruction. Five major principles influencing early applied linguistic theory are summarized, emphasizing the oral nature of language. Central to the article are discussions of: (1) prescriptive or normative grammar, (2) transformational grammar, (3) tagmemic analysis, and (4) contrastive linguistics. A selected bibliography is included. (RL)

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APPLIED LINGUISTICS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS*

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POLICY

The interest of American linguists in the problems of language teaching is not of recent vintage. The great American linguist, Leonard Bloomfield, discusses, in the final chapter of his seminal work, Language (1933), the ways in which the findings of linguistics could be applied to the teaching of foreign languages. A no less distinguished predecessor of his, William Dwight Whitney, one of the great Sanskrit scholars this country has ever known, wrote school grammars of English, French and German, in addition to treatises on linguistics. Bloomfield himself began his career as a teacher of German and also wrote an elementary textbook for this language. Despite this long interest in language teaching, it was not until 1911 that any considerable body of linguists assumed the role of active language teachers and attempted to apply the findings of their science to the practical problems of language teaching.

How did the linguists get into the language teaching picture in the first place? The answer lies in the status of foreign language teaching in the United States in the immediately preceding decades, which were characterized by essentially three factors: (a) very little foreign language learning, especially on the high school level, (b) little or no attention paid to the use of the foreign language (i.e. understanding and speaking), the aim of instruction being to teach the grammar of the language, and (c) lack of interest on the part of the average American, in general, to enter into closer contact with foreign cultures and countries, whether through language or otherwise.

U. S. entry into World War II brought an abrupt end to this "linguistic isolationism." It was realized that vast numbers of young Americans would soon be scattered throughout the globe and that they would have need of many languages (not merely French, Spanish or German) and that a practical speaking knowledge was far more important than a knowledge of reading and the ability to recite grammatical paradigms, if language was to be of any use at all.

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The establishment of language teaching facilities, such as the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) or the Army's Civil Affairs Training School is a matter of historical record and need not be reviewed here. Of interest to us is the fact that, in the absence of a sufficient number of language teachers with a practical control of even the familiar languages, the linguistic scientists were called upon to produce a wide variety of language teaching materials, ranging from simple phrase books to dictionaries and complete language courses for scores of languages.

In this teaching material written by the linguist, there emerged an outlook on language teaching that was quite different from that prevalent in the schools and colleges of the day. The linguistic principles on which these differences are based and the con-

* Address by Dr. Paul A. Gaeng, Associate Professor of Linguistics, University of Virginia, delivered to the Annual Meeting of the MFLAV, Nov. 1, 1969.

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clusions which linguists drew therefrom are of interest to the language teacher. These principles, the "five slogans of the day" - as they came to be called, may be summed up as follows:

1. Language is speech, not writing - The truth of this statement is rather obvious when we keep in mind that the bulk of our linguistic activity is carried on orally and that we do not, normally, write notes to each other all day long. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the student should first be taught to speak the foreign language and that reading and writing should be taken up at a later stage in the language learning process.
2. A Language is a set of habits - Strongly influenced by anthropological leanings (the founders of the American school of linguistics, Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield, were primarily interested in and concerned with anthropology), the linguists looked upon language as a social phenomenon, as but another example of learned and shared behavior -- the most structured type of learned and shared behavior, at that. And since the ordinary speaker is largely unaware of the mechanism of speech and that he is aware only of what he says and not how he says it, the linguists concluded that the learner too must be taught to handle the mechanisms (the sound and grammatical structures) of the new language "out of awareness" - - so to speak.
3. Teach the language, not about the language. - The hopelessness of trying to learn to play the piano without ever playing it is rather obvious. A lecture on the history and construction of pianos, the theory of harmony and the great piano music of the past will not make you an accomplished pianist (not even a good dilettante, for that matter) and chances are you would not stay with a teacher who regaled you with his theoretical knowledge lesson after lesson. Yet, until not too long ago, lecturing about language rather than working in the language was the common method of teaching a language in many a classroom. The student was above all expected to make statements about the language he was learning and a good deal of class time was taken up by translating disconnected sentences of the la plume de ma tante type into the foreign language to check whether the student had learned his rules and paradigms well.
4. A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say. - For the linguist the ultimate source of information about a language are the native speakers of that language. The way they talk is the language; and, thus, the linguist has carried over into language teaching the concept of the 'informant,' that is, the native speaker who serves as a source of information about all aspects of his culture, including, of course, his language. Sometimes the speech of the native informant does not quite jibe with the rules set

down by prescriptive authorities, especially as regards differences between formal and informal speech; and where traditional grammar rarely describes anything but the formal variety, the linguist naturally prefers the informal variety which he hears from his informant, provided, of course, that whatever he hears is a widely accepted form of speech. The linguist's war-cry has become "copy what the native speaker says" - whether or not it agrees with what is in the textbook because "the native speaker is always right." This attitude on the part of the linguist has recently been given renewed currency by the followers of the Chomsky school, the so-called generative grammarians, who make quite a case for the native speaker's "linguistic intuition" and the fact that "the native speaker can do no wrong."

5. Languages are different. - Prescriptive grammars of the familiar European languages have traditionally been derived to a great extent from the grammars of Greek and Latin and recitation of conjugational, pronominal and other paradigmatic patterns was the order of the day. True, many of the categories of Greco-Roman grammar can be applied without too much difficulty and distortion to the familiar languages of Europe that are also of Indo-European origin. It was found, however, that forcing non-Indo-European languages into the Priscian mold just does not work. It is rather like forcing a square peg into a round hole. Linguists, therefore, have become committed to the principle that each language should be analysed in terms of its own grammatical structure and not in terms of Latin and Greek or some fancied universal grammar based on Aristotelian semantic categories.

Central to all modern scientific work on language is the realization that human linguistic activity is first of all and basically spoken and only secondarily written. Linguistic analysis will furnish rules of the spoken language which are often simpler than, or at any rate different from the rules of the written language which are given in traditional grammars. There are various advantages for the teacher in being able to formulate rules concerning the spoken language. Obviously, these are the only rules that can properly be used in the planning of the purely audiolingual phase of any course and even if writing and spelling go hand in hand with speaking, students should be aware of their behavior in speech, as well as in writing.

Here is an example: In oral French the majority of nouns are invariable in singular and plural, since the final -s, which expresses the plural in orthography, has normally no equivalent in speech. The liaison at the end of a plural noun, for instance, les filles arrivent, is at best optional and, in any event, not usually observed in colloquial French. (There are, of course, a few special forms of the canal/canaux, cheval/chevaux, oeil/yeux, etc. type, but these are exceptions and must be learned as such). A spoken -s as a plural marker in speech is very rare; to my knowledge it

exists only in the noun les moeurs (and even here there are French speakers who do not sound the final -s) and the pronoun tous. Whether a noun in French is singular or plural, then, is generally expressed orally not by the noun itself but by the word preceding the noun: le livre, mon livre, ce livre are singular, while les livres, mes livres, ces livres are plural.

In similar fashion, in terms of spoken language rules, the feminine adjective grande is not derived from the masculine form grand by the addition of a final -e; rather, masculine /grā/ is derived from feminine /grād/ by the subtraction of the final consonant.

Linguists have realized that language is behavior and that behavior can be learned only in inducing the student to "behave," that is, to perform in the language. Thus, linguists distinguish the learning of language (performing in the language) from the learning of rules and grammatical terminology. This does not mean that rules are superfluous and can be dispensed with altogether; it simple means that they cannot take the place of language learning itself.

Linguistic analysis gives an excellent clue as to what units of "behavior" should be taught in individual exercises. Linguistic analysis is basically a way of decomposing utterances of a language into their component elements until the linguist obtains the entire inventory of building stones which the speaker of the language has at his disposal in order to construct those utterances. Language learning, as viewed by the linguist, is, in a sense, the direct application of this process of analysis. The learner gets to know slowly, systematically, and one by one each one of those building stones that have been identified and analysed by the linguist.

I must, however, emphasize that linguistics, or at least that part of linguistic science which has bearing on the planning, preparation and presentation of teaching material, called Applied Linguistics, has no answer to many problems which are still confronting the language teacher; in other words. Applied Linguistics will not help us in designing the method with which we can achieve fluency in a language after two years of High School work. Applied Linguistics does not tell us how to teach effectively in overcrowded classrooms, nor will it lead to the preparation of teaching materials which can be used efficiently on student of varying intelligence and ability in the same classroom. Nor has linguistic science any answer when it comes to purely psychological factors in language learning, such as motivation and attitudes on the part of the student. It is not, in other words, a royal road, a panacea to language learning and, in particular, a way to quick, painless and effortless acquisition of a foreign language. It is simple a technique of analysis which can furnish the most accurate and the most efficiently formulated data on which the teaching and learning of languages can be built.

To language teachers, then, linguistics offers not a new method of teaching, not a kind of streamlined classroom procedure, but a new orientation towards language itself and, to a large extent, a new way of determining the fundamental facts on which the student has to base his learning. Ease of learning depends very largely upon awareness of patterns in what is being learned. For his learning to be most effective, therefore, the student needs to know and to drill himself on those patterns of the target language which differ from the corresponding features of his own language (the source language) and which cause him problems. Such points of divergence occur at all levels of linguistic structure: (a) in sounds (e.g. the /y/ in lune and /o/ in peu of French), (b) in forms (e.g. the aspectual system of the Russian verb), and (c) in syntax (e.g. the German word order). It is pointless to keep harping on parallel constructions of the mon ami est intelligent, mi amigo es inteligente, mein Freund ist intelligent and my friend is intelligent type, though it is precisely because there are many constructions in which, say, French, Spanish and English parallel each other that we get such impossible sentences from our students as mon frère est faim and mi amigo es hambre. The fundamental lesson that each language student has to learn is simply that elements of one language cannot be equated with those of another language. Linguistics aids us to isolate and deal with points where one language system interferes with another. Skillful language teachers have, of course, long known how to drill students on points of difficulty but, until linguistics has furnished us with the means of discovering all the points of interference and where trouble may arise and of diagnosing the problems and suggesting the means of overcoming them, the teacher has had to rely on intuition and experience rather than on exact and total analysis.

The results of linguistics have many uses in specific areas of language teaching. Perhaps the most important of these is grammar. The very term has had many different interpretations and meanings over the past centuries and has been used in the following senses:

1. Obedience to predetermined rules, especially those of Latin applied to English and other languages, which make up normative or prescriptive grammar. These are the kinds of rules that tell us, for instance, that the verb to be never takes a direct object, hence the censure of it's me as being "ungrammatical," or of the use of shall instead of will in the first person singular and plural of the future (a rule first enunciated by a professor of geometry (!) in Oxford University back in the 18th century who, among other things, wrote a grammar of English in Latin).
2. Avoidance of either really or supposedly socially disfavored forms, such as it ain't him or I don't know from nothing (which may not be quite comme il faut at the dean's party but are, nevertheless, structurally perfectly good English sentences).

3. Drill on paradigmatic sets of forms, such as amo, amas, amat, or I went, you went, he went, or je vais, tu vas, il va, etc.
4. The structure of a given language the way it is actually spoken and written, and a description of this structure.

From the point of view of learning a language as it is actually used, the first three types of "grammar" are either of little help or downright misleading (#1, for instance). Insistence on these concepts of grammar in the traditional language teaching has rendered the very term grammar anathema to many. On the other hand, since the oral approach involves learning sentences first of all, before analysing them or learning how to vary them, the notion has become widespread that the audio-lingual method throws grammar completely out of the window. This holds certainly true of the first three types mentioned; it is not at all true of the fourth, the description of the structure of a given language, since our learners absolutely must become aware of the structural facts of the language and the bearing these facts have on what they have learned by heart and how to vary it. It does not matter what term we use -- whether we call the presentation of the facts of language grammar or structural analysis or generalizations or something else, what does matter is that we must devote part of our time to such a presentation.

Grammar is not to be thrown out of the window at all, but if it is to be useful in language teaching it must be re-oriented in contrast to its traditional role -- re-oriented away from the memorization and recitation of rules towards the acquisition of patterns. Our basic aim must be to build up in our students, by means of appropriate drills, whole sets of new patterns of language behavior. The drills may be accompanied by appropriate verbal explanations of structure where necessary, to make it easier for the learner to understand the nature of the patterns he is acquiring; but a formulation or explanation can never take the place of drill on the actual pattern itself. A student who can recite the list of Latin verbs that take the ablative and then says librum utor has not learned Latin; the one who does not know the list but says libro utor because he has been conditioned, by means of appropriate drills, to reject the accusative because it does not sound right in that context, has learned the language far better.

While it would not be possible to discuss the application of linguistic analysis to all sectors of grammatical structure in a presentation which, I am afraid, is running longer than you originally may have bargained for, let me briefly outline some of the more recent developments in linguistics which seem to have direct bearing and application to classroom language teaching.

The dernier cri nowadays is unquestionably transformational grammar. This grammatical theory investigates the formal or syntactic prop-

erties of sentences. It is a type of syntactical analysis based on the concept that the entire syntax of a language can be described in formulas showing how utterances can be created from others by successive series of transformations. All sentences in a given language are considered derivatives of basic sentence types, called kernel sentences. Differences among sentence structures are represented by the relation between source kernel sentences and their transforms (i.e. sentences derived from kernels by means of transformations). Thus, for instance, the passive John got bitten by a dog is a transform of the active sentence A dog bit John; or The growling of lions is a transform of the kernel sentence Lions growl. In one of its applications, the process of transformation gives us a formal means of differentiating between apparently identical structures. Take the following pair of sentences: John is easy to please and John is eager to please. The passive transform John is easily pleased is acceptable to an English speaker, whereas, *John is eagerly pleased is not. (The asterisk that precedes the sentence is a convention among linguists to indicate that the sentence is a grammatical malformation).

Let us illustrate this process on the basis of an example from French. Here are three sentences:¹ (a) Le garçon embrasse la femme, (b) Le garçon obéit à la femme, and (c) Le garçon parle à la femme. All three are of the noun - verb - noun type (noun phrase (NP) + verb phrase (VP) + noun phrase (NP), to use transformationalist jargon) in the active voice. The noun complement in sentence (a) is a direct object, whereas the noun complements (the second noun phrases) in sentence (b) and (c) are indirect objects. However, only sentences (a) and (b) can occur as transforms in the passive voice. We may say La femme est embrassé par le garçon and La femme est obéie par le garçon but not *La femme est parlée par le garçon. (We could make the identical demonstration in Spanish also: (a) El muchacho besa a la mujer -- La mujer es besada por el muchacho, (b) El muchacho obedece a la mujer -- La mujer es obedecida por el muchacho, (c) El muchacho (le) habla a la mujer -- *La mujer es hablada por el muchacho). In this fashion we can show that apparently identical constructions on the surface (so-called surface structures) are, in reality, quite different in their semantic interpretation (in the deep structure). By certain restrictive and obligatory (as well as optional) rules, transformational grammar can convert kernel sentences into types of constructions which show one or more of the relationships traditionally termed active-passive, declarative-interrogative, main clause-subordinate clause, etc. Also, certain peculiarities of structure between the source and target languages can be isolated and proper drills devised to prevent impossible sentence constructions like *Qui Jean voit-il or *Le garçon fut donné l'argent, due to interference from either target language structure (Qui Jean voit-il, hence *Qui Jean voit-il)

¹ These examples are adapted from S. Belasco, Applied Linguistics: French, Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1961, p. iv.

student and knows what the real learning problems are will have drilled the student in the pattern Je veux lui dire la vérité, Quiero decirle la verdad, Ich will ihm die Wahrheit sagen (I want to tell him the truth), Je veux lui demander la vérité, Quiero preguntarle la verdad, Ich will ihm die Wahrheit fragen (I want to ask him the truth), in contrast to Je veux qu'il dise la vérité, Quiero que diga la verdad, Ich will, dass er die Wahrheit sage (I want him to tell the truth), Je veux qu'il sache la vérité, Quiero que sepa la verdad, Ich will, dass er die Wahrheit wisse (I want him to know the truth), etc., thus avoiding both fractured translations and fractured French, Spanish or German.

Special emphasis, then, must be put on those elements of the foreign language which are made especially difficult by the interference coming from the native language. We have ample evidence that when learning a foreign language we tend to transfer our entire native language's stem in the process. In the sound system, for example, we tend to transfer to the target language our phonemes and their variants, our stress and rhythm patterns, our transitions (or junctures), our intonation patterns and their interaction with other phonemes. The native speaker of any language is trained from childhood to perceive the difference between the phonemes of his language, those smallest building stones available to the speaker of a particular language. After all, his language operates ultimately only through these differences. What makes roue and rue different words in French is the difference between /u/ and /y/. What makes roue and coup different words is the difference between /r/ and /k/. What makes the Spanish caro and carro different is the difference between the so-called r-simple and r-multiple, etc. What makes the comprehension and pronunciation of foreign language difficult is that our entire mechanism of comprehension and pronunciation is geared to perceive and differentiate the significant (the phonemic) differences of our own language. The difference between French roue and rue which is obvious to any Frenchman is often difficult for the speaker of English to perceive, since modern English has no /y/ sound and does not, therefore, distinguish /u/ and /y/, just as the difference between leave and live is difficult to hear for many a Frenchman (and speakers of Romance languages, in general), since French has only one /i/ phoneme (distinctive sound unit) and makes no distinction between the open and close varieties; hence such errors as Tomorrow I live for Paris and Where do you leave? (Such mistakes of phonemic perception are, then, often carried into spelling).

The auditory discrimination problem may best be tackled by contrasting so-called minimal pairs. For example, in French we might contrast the vowels in pur/peur, sur/soeur, pu/peu, fut/feu, deux/dos, peut/pot, etc. or the nasals in dans/don, ment/mon, vent/vingt, sent/sein, bon/bain, vont/vin, etc. among themselves. This nasal vs. non-nasal contrast should be especially drilled since English speaking students seem to have difficulty distinguishing beau from bon or côte from conte, simple because nasality in English is merely

teaching goes by the name of contrastive linguistics. The theory assumes that, although each language possesses its own unique structure, it is not only possible to contrast languages in some meaningful way but it is also possible by means of contrastive analysis to predict the difficulties which speakers of one language will have when they try to learn another. The language teacher has, in his daily classroom work, a marvelous opportunity to test and elaborate this theory. Some of the mistakes our students make are based on false analogies within the foreign language, as when *vous faisez becomes the second person plural present active indicative of faire or *sabo the first person singular present active indicative of saber. These are the same kinds of mistakes that French and Spanish children also make when they learn to speak their language, just as an English child is likely to say *breaked by analogy of baked or *sticked on the basis of kicked. The vast majority of mistakes, however, come from a totally different source; they result from carrying over into the foreign language the speech habits of English -- habits of pronunciation, morphology and syntax. All of us language teachers are well acquainted with this, yet not until recently have the kinds of mistakes that students make in learning a second language been analysed and fitted into a coherent theory.

Charles Fries said in his now classic Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1945) that "the most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner." (p. 9). The same assumption that in the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning is also applied to the preparation of language achievement tests by Robert Lado. Both of these scholars assume, and rightly so to my mind, that the student who comes into contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him and those elements that are different will be difficult. Practically all mistakes made by a learner of a foreign language are due to one simple and comprehensible failure: the learner mistakenly equates building stones of the foreign system with individual building stones of his system. He wants to use the foreign building stones as if they had been taken from his set. It is the constructions in which two languages parallel each other that are responsible for the errors of the students, as pointed out earlier. They are a blessing in one way because they are easy in themselves; they are a curse because they establish that mistaken identification of building stones of different systems. Certainly Mon ami est intelligent corresponds very nicely to My friend is intelligent but Je veux lui cacher la vérité or Quiero ocultarle la verdad or Ich will ihm die Wahrheit verhehlen do not correspond to I want him to hide the truth. The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the

student and knows what the real learning problems are will have drilled the student in the pattern Je veux lui dire la vérité, Quiero decirle la verdad, Ich will ihm die Wahrheit sagen (I want to tell him the truth), Je veux lui demander la vérité, Quiero preguntarle la verdad, Ich will ihm die Wahrheit fragen (I want to ask him the truth), in contrast to Je veux qu'il dise la vérité, Quiero que diga la verdad, Ich will, dass er die Wahrheit sage (I want him to tell the truth), Je veux qu'il sache la vérité, Quiero que sepa la verdad, Ich will, dass er die Wahrheit wisse (I want him to know the truth), etc., thus avoiding both fractured translations and fractured French, Spanish or German.

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the result of an adjoining consonant and is without phonemic significance. Hence, the English speaker is not used to paying attention to the nasal pronunciation of a vowel.

Contrastive drills of this type in Spanish should particularly stress vowels of unstressed syllables, especially the final syllable, where lack of a clear distinction between -a and -o may lead to morphological confusion, e.g. hermano - hermana, muchacho - muchacha, where the final vowels are clear gender markers, or hablo - habla, cuento - cuenta, and we might add the forms hable and cuente, where failure to produce a clear vowel distinction may lead to misunderstanding in person and mood of the verb.

In the same manner, the grammatical structure of the native language tends to be transferred to the foreign language. The student naturally tends to clothe the foreign language into sentence forms, modification devices and number, gender and case patterns of his native language. Every French teacher is well aware, I am sure, of English interference in the matter of French possessives, where the student is apt to equate French sa with her and son with his, so that we get *Jean cherche son cravate, *Il met son chemise, *Jeanne met sa chapeau, *Elle fait sa devoir, etc. By the same token, the Spanish teacher is constantly faced with the student's use of su in the sense of his, her and its and sus in the sense of their, in constructions like *Pablo y su hermanos and *Pablo y Maria hacen sus tarea. Here again, we must put the student through extensive drills in which he is made aware that French and Spanish possessives just do not function the same way they do in English.

In conclusion, let me say that I believe a good knowledge of the results of linguistic analysis should be essential for everyone concerned with language teaching. To date, many a language teacher has been frightened of linguistics, as if it were some impossibly esoteric, incomprehensible technique, inaccessible to all except an especially gifted few. It is true, unfortunately, that all too often the findings and discoveries of linguistic analysts have been expressed in such involved and complicated terms that they have succeeded in alienating precisely those who might benefit most from the results of linguistic analysis -- the teachers of English and foreign languages. I am sure that many a language teacher has a genuine interest in learning how he can best use the implications of linguistic research but is discouraged because the linguist quite often complicates what he purports to simplify. It is perfectly possible, however, to present the findings of linguistics in such a way that they can be understood by the non-initiated in structural (and nowadays transformational) linguistics and applied to classroom problems by anyone with a good knowledge of the language he or she is teaching. Presentations listed in the following selected bibliography are but some of the most outstanding examples of how the findings of linguistics can be made accessible to the language teacher. Linguistics need no longer be a bête noire; to the contrary, it can be a useful help to teachers in keeping

abreast of current developments. But remember that linguistics is not going to teach you how to handle the French subjunctive, because it is not a teaching method but merely a growing body of knowledge and theory, and though it may offer helpful answers to some of the problems of language teaching, it surely does not know all the answers.

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